

IV. THE PRINCIPLES FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE KINGDOM

Matthew Chapter 5 - 7
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A. MATTHEW RECORDED THE THINGS WHICH JESUS SAID SHOULD CHARACTERIZE THE PEOPLE OF THE KINGDOM (Matt. 5:1-16).

1. People of the Kingdom should be characterized by spiritual humility before God (Matt. 5:3-6).
 - a. Jesus said the poor in spirit were blessed for the kingdom of heaven was theirs (Matt. 5:3). Those who humbled themselves and acknowledged their unworthiness and helplessness and trusted in the Lord's saving grace were subjects of the kingdom.
 - b. Jesus said, secondly, that those who mourned were blessed in that they would be comforted (Matt. 5:4). This no doubt refers to sorrowing over one's own sinful estate but also to the believer's sorrow over the various sinful situations in this world. One day God will wipe away all tears of believers but the ungodly will experience eternal sorrow.
 - c. Jesus said the meek were blessed in that they would inherit the earth (Matt. 5:5). Those who are gentle and mild and suffer the abuse of evil-doers for Jesus' sake will one day inherit the earth or a place in the millennial kingdom when Christ rules over the whole earth.
 - d. Fourthly, Jesus said that those who hungered and thirsted after righteousness were blessed in that they would be filled (Matt. 5:6). Those who sought righteousness over ungodliness would be filled with its rewards and not filled with the corruptions of the ungodly.
2. People of the kingdom should be characterized by spiritual humility toward others (Matt. 5:7-12).
 - a. Jesus said those who were merciful would obtain mercy (Matt. 5:7). Those helping others who could not help themselves and showing mercy in various ways would obtain mercy when their works are one day reviewed for the purpose of reward (I Cor. 3:12-15).
 - b. Secondly, Jesus said those who were pure in heart would see God (Matt. 5:8). In other words, those who had a clean conscience and unmixed motives in serving the Lord would see the Lord in His kingdom glory.
 - c. Thirdly, Jesus said the peace-makers would be blessed in being called the children of God (Matt. 5:9). Unlike the children of the devil, who cause all kinds of sinful strife, those making peace would one day be acknowledged as God's children who evidenced their godliness by their humble endeavors to make peace.
 - d. Fourthly, Jesus said those who were persecuted for righteousness sake would be blessed for the Kingdom of heaven would be theirs (Matt. 5:10). In other words, those who suffered in doing righteously because their conduct reproved the ungodly and brought about their hostility, they would inherit the kingdom of heaven.

- e. Finally, Jesus told His disciples they would be blessed for their association and loyalty to Him because it would mean a greater reward. He reminded them that this is what the prophets had suffered (Matt. 5:11,12).
3. People of the kingdom should be characterized as witnesses with good works (Matt. 5:13-16).
 - a. Jesus referred to His disciples as the "salt" of the earth. In this analogy, as salt would season, people of the kingdom should add a special flavor to this world as they live righteously according to the principles laid down for the subjects of the king. In this analogy as salt would preserve and hinder corruption, people of the kingdom should be a deterrent to the evil of this world, rather than conforming to it. And as salt would create thirst, people of the kingdom should cause others to thirst for the righteousness of God displayed in their lives. Finally, as salt was useless when it has lost its flavor, so would people of the kingdom be if they failed to be characterized in this way, their testimony would be useless.
 - b. Jesus also referred to His disciples as the "light" of the world. In this analogy those demonstrating the principles of those in the kingdom would be like a city set on a hill. Their righteousness would certainly be seen in a sin-darkened world (Matt. 5:14). And just as the light of a lamp was not to be hidden, those of the kingdom were to be a witness to others through a life of good works (Matt. 5:15,16).

B. MATTHEW RECORDED THE THINGS WHICH JESUS SAID SHOULD CONTRAST THE PEOPLE OF THE KINGDOM (Matt. 5:17-48).

1. Jesus said the people of the kingdom should demonstrate a different kind of righteousness than the Scribes and the Pharisees demonstrated (Matt. 5:17-20).

The Scribes and Pharisees sought to fulfill the law of Moses as a means of acquiring righteousness. Rather than seeing themselves sinners condemned by the law, they went about hypocritically displaying an outward righteousness with no real changes in their hearts. Note both the purpose and the inability of the law (Gal. 3:19-22; 2:16, 21; Rom. 9:30-32). Jesus said He had not come to destroy the law but to fulfill it. This He did at the cross which ended the dispensation of the law (Gal. 3:10-13; Rom. 10:1-5; Phil. 3:9).
2. Jesus said people of the Kingdom should understand what lies beneath the law concerning murder and avoid its causes (Matt. 5:21-26).
 - a. Notice that Jesus begins here with the first of six laws and points out that people of His kingdom should understand that there is a source that leads to sinful conduct.
 - b. Jesus pointed out beneath the act of murder were three forms of unrighteous anger (Matt. 5:21,22). First, for being angry with one's brother without cause one was in danger of judgment or could be taken to court. Secondly, for insulting one's brother by calling him raca (empty one) put one in danger of the council or trial before the Sanhedrin the highest Jewish court. Thirdly, for calling one's brother a fool one was in danger of hell fire. Jesus was pointing that unrighteous anger contains the seeds of murder.

- c. To avoid the risk of where unrighteous anger could lead, Jesus pointed out if one had wronged his brother he was to admit the guilt go and be reconciled with his brother (Matt. 5:23,24). If one who was guilty of unrighteous anger, and yet remained unrepentant, he could be brought into judgment which could lead to prison and the fullest recompense.
3. Jesus said people of the kingdom should understand what lies beneath the law concerning adultery and avoid its causes (Matt. 5:27-30). Underneath the act of adultery was sinful and impure desires. The law condemned adultery (Ex. 20:14; Dt. 5:1;8). But while the law condemned the act, Jesus condemned the desire that leads to the act. It wasn't enough to abstain from the act, a man needed to abstain from the desire which leads to the act. To do this, one needs to maintain a pure thought life which demands strict self-discipline. The Rabbis had taught that it was the eye which led a person to commit adultery. Jesus was pointing out that it was the problem of the heart that led to adultery and showed how illogical their interpretation was by carrying their view to its logical conclusion.
 4. Jesus said people of the kingdom should understand what lies beneath the law concerning divorce and avoid its practice (Matt. 5:31,32). The law said a man could put away his wife by giving a bill of divorcement (Dt. 24:1-4). This was never God's intention but He had permitted it because of possible abuse for the wives held in disfavor by their husbands (Mal. 2:16; Matt. 19:4-6; Dt. 24:1-4 cp Matt. 19:7,8). Jesus said if a man put away his wife, unless she had committed fornication, and he married another then he had committed adultery. He said the one marrying the wife that was put away, without just cause, was committing adultery also. This is no doubt stated because in God's sight the two would still be considered married, since there was no just cause for divorcement.
 5. Jesus said people of the kingdom should understand what lies beneath the law concerning taking oaths and avoid its practices (Matt. 5:33-37).

The law of Moses prohibited God's people from swearing falsely by using God's name (Lev. 19:12; Num. 30:2; Dt. 23:21). By using God's name in an oath meant to call God as one's witness. To avoid the vain and sinful use of God's name the Jews substituted God's name with names like heaven, earth, Jerusalem or even their own head. According to the interpretations of the Jewish Rabbis, if God's name was not used in an oath, it was not swearing. Jesus pointed out that even though God's name was substituted for other things it was still swearing because those names still involved God and His works. To swear than by heaven was to swear by God's throne. To swear by earth was to swear by God's footstool. To swear by Jerusalem was to swear by the place where God had put His name and finally, to swear by one's own head was to swear by God because we are part of His creation. Jesus said people of His kingdom should not swear at all but their word should be sufficient otherwise it would lead to sin.

6. Jesus said people of the kingdom should understand what lies beneath the law of recompense and avoid its practice (Matt. 5:38-42).

The law said a person could recompense evil with evil (Ex. 21:22-26; Lev. 24:17-20; Dt. 19:18-21). Jesus taught that people in the kingdom were not to seek revenge but to be non-resistant and leave the matters of justice and punishment to God (Heb. 10:30). To

illustrate this truth Jesus used four examples. In order for a person to live this kind of self-sacrificing life he has to no doubt be controlled by the Holy Spirit.

7. Jesus said people of the kingdom should understand what lies beneath the law of love and to practice it (Matt. 5:43-48).

According to the law one was to love his neighbor and hate his enemy (Lev. 19:18; Dt. 23:3-6; 7:2). This apparently referred to righteous hostility against those who were against God's people (Psa. 139: 21,22). Jesus taught that the people of His kingdom should love their enemies. He said there was no reward for those who loved like others in the world. Loving one's enemies was the way to show others that one is a child of God. To be perfect does not mean flawlessness, it means spiritual maturity as evidenced in loving like God loves unconditionally and without partiality.

C. MATTHEW RECORDED THE THINGS WHICH JESUS SAID SHOULD CONTROL THE PEOPLE OF THE KINGDOM (6:1-7:12).

1. People of the Kingdom should be controlled by a higher motive when it comes to charity (Matt. 6:1-4).

Here Jesus taught that His subjects in the kingdom should not be hypocritical in their giving to be seen of men. Deeds such as alms giving should be done for the Father's approval and not for men. Those who gave to be seen of men have their reward Jesus said, meaning the praise of men in this life. The believer's giving should be spontaneous and for the Father's glory not ours.

2. People of the kingdom should be controlled by a higher motive when it comes to prayer (Matt. 6:5-15).

- a. Unlike the hypocritical Pharisees, Jesus said His subjects were not to pray to be seen of men. Those praying to be seen of men had their reward which was the praise of men. Jesus taught that prayer should express genuine expressions of the heart to the Father and not be filled with vain or repetitious phrases to impress one's hearers (Matt. 6:5-8).

- b. Jesus then gave His disciples a model prayer or an example on how to pray. This prayer was not to be uttered by others in its exact words. Note Matt. 6:7. They were to pray to the Father in a worshipful manner ascribing praise and honor to Him (Matt. 6:9). They were to pray for God's kingdom to come or be established on the earth (Matt. 6:10). After putting God's interests first they were to present their own needs for things such as food and forgiveness of their sins that would break fellowship with God (Matt. 6:11,12). They were to pray for God's protection and preservation concerning temptation and sin (Matt. 6:13). Note that verses 14 and 15 are not part of the prayer but Jesus pointed out that forgiveness for one's day by day sins was conditional or predicated upon one's forgiveness of others. If believers expect God to freely forgive them of their wrongdoing then they must also forgive those who have wronged them. This means those unwilling to forgive others cannot maintain fellowship with God.

3. People of the kingdom should be controlled by a higher motive when it comes to fasting (Matt. 6:16-18).

Unlike the hypocrites who fasted to be seen of men, Jesus taught His disciples and subjects of the kingdom that fasting should be a matter between a person and God. Those fasting to be seen of men had their reward but those fasting secretly would be rewarded openly by the Father.

4. People of the kingdom should be controlled by a higher motive when it comes to money-matters (Matt. 6:19-24).

- a. First, Jesus taught why it was a futile purpose to lay up treasures and live one's life for material things. There was no security in things that could be destroyed by natural elements or stolen away by others. To lay up treasures in heaven was an investment not subject to loss (Matt. 6:19,20).

- b. Secondly, Jesus taught that the place where one put his treasures would determine where one's heart or interest lay (Matt.6:21). If he laid up treasures in heaven it would indicate his heart or interest was on the spiritual things of God. If he laid up treasures on the earth it would indicate his interest was on material things of this world.

- c. Thirdly, Jesus taught the importance of a proper perception in regard to material things (Matt. 6:22,23). To do this He used the analogy of a person's eyes. If a person's eye was healthy it let in light and he could see properly. If his eye was defective there was darkness and inability to see things properly. The point is many were, and still are, blinded by the things of this world so that they do not see the real value of laying up treasures in heaven.

- d. Finally, Jesus taught a lesson on priority and precedence in regard to material things (Matt. 6:24). A person could not live for God and live for material things. Jesus used an analogy of a servant trying to serve two masters. So then a choice has to be made.

5. People of the kingdom should be controlled by a higher motive than concern for physical and material needs (Matt. 6:25-34).

Here Jesus used two examples of God's provision to show that God's people can rely upon Him to meet their needs. First, if God cares for the fowls of the air, He will surely care for His people (Matt. 6:25,26). Secondly, if God cares for the lilies of the field, He will certainly provide for His people who love Him and serve Him (Matt. 6:28-30). Jesus said concern for the physical and material needs is what the unconverted Gentiles sought after (Matt. 6:32). In contrast to this mundane motive, Jesus exhorted His people to put the things of God first in their lives and that would ensure them of God meeting their physical and material needs (Matt. 6:33). Finally, Jesus exhorted His people not to be anxious for the things of tomorrow because each day will have enough things to care about (Matt. 6:34)

6. People of the kingdom should be controlled by a higher motive than hypocritical conduct and judgments (Matt. 7:1-6).

Jesus taught His people that judging others of things when their own lives were not right was hypocrisy. He pointed out how the law of sowing and reaping applied to the matter of judging others and He used an analogy of a board or beam compared to a mote or splinter to teach them the need to live honestly and sincerely before others. Matt. 7:6 shows us that certain judgments are needful as in the case of people who show contempt toward the gospel and the things of the Lord.

7. People of the kingdom should be controlled by prayerfulness and a proper regard for others (Matt. 7:7-12).

Jesus taught His people to be people of prayer and encouraged them to pray using the example or analogy of how an earthly Father would give to his children. If an earthly Father knows how to give good gifts to his children how much more does the heavenly Father. Then Jesus exhorted His followers to treat others as they, themselves, would like to be treated. To do this was the essence of what the law and the prophets taught - to love God and then to love their neighbor as themselves.

D. MATTHEW RECORDED THE THINGS WHICH JESUS SAID TO CAUTION PEOPLE CONCERNING THE KINGDOM (Matt. 7:13-29)

1. Firstly, Jesus spoke of "two ways" to point out the need for a right relationship with God to enter the kingdom (Matt. 7:13,14).

Here Jesus likened entrance into the kingdom as going through a narrow gate. The entrance to destruction was through a wide gate. Those going through the narrow gate would be few while those going through the wide gate would be many. This points out that most people will not enter the kingdom and this truth is substantiated in numerous passages which reveal two truths. First, the way to heaven is only in Jesus Christ (Jn. 14:6) and secondly, salvation is only in a right relationship with Him (Acts 4:12; Jn. 3:36; 6:40).

2. Secondly, Jesus spoke of "two kinds of trees" to point out the need for a right relationship with God to enter the kingdom (Matt. 7:15-20).

Using the analogy of a good tree and a bad tree and their fruits, Jesus taught His disciples how they could discern, between those who were false prophets and those who were genuine. As a tree, which produced no good fruit, would be cut down and burned in a fire, so would false prophets who have no relationship with God.

3. Thirdly, Jesus spoke of "two professions" to point out the need for a right relationship with God to enter the kingdom (Matt. 7:21-23).

Jesus taught here that there is a difference between religion and a relationship with God. Just because a person professes to know the Lord doesn't mean he knows the Lord. One day when the King returns to establish His kingdom after the tribulation period many will

not enter for this very same reason. The proof of one's genuine relationship is seen in his doing the will of God.

4. Fourthly, Jesus spoke of "two builders" to point out the need for a right relationship with God to enter the kingdom (Matt. 7:24-29).

In this analogy of two builders Jesus once again emphasizes the importance of obedience. The one obeying His sayings would be like a wise man who built his house upon a rock. A wise man is that man who puts his faith in Jesus Christ, who is the Rock, and lives his life for Him. The foolish man refuses to repent and rejects Christ.

Note what effects Jesus' teachings had upon the people when He had finished His sermon on the mount (Matt. 7:28,29). The people were astonished. Christians today who have come under the rule of God should seek to implement these principles which Jesus taught in their lives, not as a means to obtain salvation or to keep salvation, but as a testimony and evidence that they have truly repented and do indeed possess salvation.

EXPOSITORY NOTES

Matt. 5:11: Notice the change, from the use of the third person "they," to the use of the second person "ye," shows that the instructions which Jesus gave were directed to His disciples in particular. It is evident that many others also heard and were included in much of what was said (Matt. 7:28-29).

Matt. 5:21, 27,31, 33, 38,43:

In these verses Jesus used the phrase, "ye have heard that it was said by them of old..." Each of these phrases introduces a particular law and how it was interpreted by the Rabbis. Notice while these interpretations dealt with certain acts, Jesus showed that God's laws also dealt with the thoughts and intents or motives of the heart as well.

Matt. 5:48: Note the word "perfect" used here does not imply flawlessness or the absence of imperfections, it has to do with full development or growth meaning spiritual maturity. To believe that a Christian can attain sinless perfection in this life is unscriptural (I Pet. 1:15,16; I Jn. 1:8-10).

Matt. 6:9-13: Here the Lord Jesus gave His disciples a pattern for prayer. This prayer has been called the Lord's prayer but the Lord never prayed it. The Lord's prayer is cited in John 17. This pattern which Jesus gave here has been taken as a prayer to be uttered at particular times or on particular occasions. However, to use this prayer in such a manner is to negate the Lord's teachings in the preceding verses (Matt. 6:7,8) and to miss the context and meaning for which Jesus gave it as well. Note, although the last sentence of this model prayer has been omitted from most modern translations, it does appear in the majority of manuscripts.

Matt. 6:23 The Kingdom of God here has reference to God's spiritual and universal kingdom which includes all those saved and brought under the rule of God and into a relationship with Him. This also includes all those who have received salvation through the new birth by faith in Christ (Jn. 3:5-7).

It should be noted however, that the kingdom of heaven which had "drawn near" was the promised Messianic and Davidic kingdom and the sermon on the mount was a discourse on the rules of that kingdom. The sermon then was a treatise on repentance and a constitution for those who would come into that kingdom. In one sense believers who make up the church today may apply these rules in their lives (II Tim. 3:16,17) set forth in this sermon, having come under the rule of God, but the primary interpretation of the sermon on the mount is truth for those to whom the Davidic millennial, Messianic kingdom was offered and that refers to Israel.

Great care should be taken not to interpret the sermon on the mount as given to the church nor should it be ascribed as a means of obtaining salvation or as a means of keeping salvation. Matthew's gospel is in theological order: He first presents the King, the prerequisite for the kingdom to be established is preached, the offer of the kingdom is made to Israel, and the code for kingdom citizens is given to Israel in the sermon on the mount.

Matt. 7:11: This verse has been taken to mean that Christians are not to make any kind of judgments concerning others. William Mc Donald has listed several instances, on the contrary, to show that Jesus was not condemning all forms of judgments:

- "1. When disputes arise between believers, they should be settled in the church before members who can decide the matter (I Cor. 6:1-8).
2. The local church is to judge serious sins of its members and take appropriate action (Matt. 18:7; I Cor. 5:9-13).
3. Believers are to judge the doctrinal teaching of teachers and preachers by the Word of God (Matt. 7:15-20; I Cor. 14:29; I Jn. 4:1).
4. Christians have to discern if others are believers in order to obey Paul's command in 2 Corinthians 6:14.
5. We have to discern which people are unruly, fainthearted, weak, etc., and treat them according to the Bible (e.g., I Thess. 5:14)."

QUESTIONS WE CAN APPLY TO OUR LIVES

1. How can a believer show himself to be salt in this world? Light? (Matt. 5:13,14)

2. Why should a believer learn to control unrighteous anger? (Matt. 5:21,22)

3. According to Matt. 5:27,28 what's wrong with the view "it's" alright to look as long as you don't touch?

4. What lesson do we learn from Matt. 5:38-42?

5. What lessons on prayer can we learn from Matt. 6:5-8?

6. According to Matt. 6:33 what does the Lord promise the one who puts the things of God first in his life?

7. What is the Lord saying in Matt. 7:21,22 that proves that religion is not enough?

8. According to Matt. 7:21,24 how can a Christian show that he has been born again?

9. How do the principles which Jesus laid down for kingdom citizens in Matt. 5-7 apply to the Christian today?

10. What lessons can be learned about self-righteousness and religion from Matt. 5:20?

11. What was Jesus teaching in Matt. 7:15-20 that Christians should be aware of?

12. Since the principles which Jesus gave in Matt. 5-7 were not manifested in the lives of the Pharisees and Sadducees what did this evidence?
